

22. The mechanism of claim 21 wherein said electrical actuator includes a solenoid with an armature coupled to move with said moveable element.

23. The mechanism of claim 22 wherein said moveable element includes a valve member in contact with a valve seat at said predetermined position.

24. A method of adjusting a spring biased mechanism, comprising the steps of:

    biasing a moveable element toward a predetermined position at least in part with a spring having a spring preload force; and

B'      adjusting the spring preload force at least in part by adjusting a voltage applied to a piezoelectric device operably coupled to the spring.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein said moveable element includes a valve member in contact with a valve seat at said predetermined position.

26. The method of claim 24 including a step of moving said moveable element away from said predetermined position at least in part by energizing an electrical actuator operably coupled to said moveable element.

27. A system comprising:

    a plurality of spring biased mechanisms, each having a biasing spring operably coupled to bias a moveable element toward a predetermined position with a spring preload force;

each of said mechanisms including a spring preload force adjuster that includes a piezoelectric device operably coupled to said spring; and

said spring preload force being at least partially a function of a voltage applied to said piezoelectric device.

28. The system of claim 27 including a common electrical circuit electrically connected to each said piezoelectric device.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein each of said spring biased mechanisms includes an electrical actuator operably coupled to said moveable element in opposition to said biasing spring.

30. The system of claim 29 wherein each said electrical actuator includes a solenoid with an armature coupled to move with said moveable element.

31. The system of claim 30 wherein each said moveable element includes a valve member in contact with a valve seat at said predetermined position.

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Remarks

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-5 and 8-19 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(a) over Bryant. In addition, claims 6 and 7 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) over Bryant. Although Applicant respectfully disagrees, the arguments have been rendered moot by the cancellation of these claims.